

SUBMISSION

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ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE



BENDIGO FOUR WHEEL DRIVE CLUB INC
PO BOX 325
GOLDEN SQUARE
VICTORIA 3555

23rd May 2007

Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Level 8
35 Spring Street
Melbourne
VICTORIA 3000

Dear Sir,

**Inquiry into the Impact of Public Land Management Practices
on Bushfires in Victoria**

Thank you for your invitation to offer a submission to the above named Inquiry. As a representative of a Four Wheel Drive Club my submission is limited in scope and I will not comment on areas beyond the Club's interest and capabilities. The two items of interest to the Club are the provision of access tracks on public lands and use of these tracks by recreational four-wheel drivers.

Tracks on Public Lands

The usefulness of well-maintained and sign-posted tracks is self-evident. Considerate four-wheel drivers will enjoy the use of these tracks and will always provide basic maintenance by removing debris and fallen branches. Some tracks are closed because some users are abusing the privilege of access to the land. Generally these users are not responsible members of a 4WD Club and have not received any training on the appropriate use of their vehicles and maintenance of the tracks.

Rather than closing the tracks which provide both recreational use and emergency access, it would be better to engage the Victorian 4wd Clubs in education and awareness raising among the general community about the importance of these tracks.

Four-wheel driving and camping on Public Lands

The two activities of most interest to the Bendigo 4WD Club as an entity are driving and camping. When undertaken by members of an organised club these activities and events are well planned and controlled. We always consider the environment and other users when we explore public lands and only drive and camp in appropriate areas.

Our campsites are always cleared of rubbish and we will remove any rubbish that had previously been left by previous campers. While general camping in parks can be a

concern for the authorities in the event of a bushfire this issue is minimal with an organised group of four-wheel drivers. Our vehicles are all equipped with radios and we travel in convoys; in the event of the detection of a fire or another emergency, the club group is well equipped to deal with the emergency and raise an early alarm. The responsible driver and camper will report any damage to equipment or signage to the appropriate authorities.

Following a fire, many 4WD Clubs assist with the repair and recovery process. This is done at a local level and a state level. The Victorian Association of 4WD Clubs coordinates the latter.

The impact of driving and camping in public land is negligible when compared with such activities as grazing, timber harvesting and so on. However recognition of the service and assistance that can be given by 4WD Clubs in monitoring and recovery activities should not be diminished. Liaison between the Government Agencies and the Clubs at a local level will encourage mutual trust and benefit.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerry Butler', written in a cursive style.

Gerry Butler
President
Bendigo 4WD Club